

HOUSEHOLD SAFETY

SPC Sergio Trejo and his family stand outside their new home in Houston, TX. The Helping A Hero troop support group presented the home to the family.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army:
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Spring • Summer

DIALING EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS USING CELL PHONES

When an emergency occurs on the military installation, using a hardwired Garrison phone line to dial 911 will route the emergency call to a military police desk or emergency operator. Hardwired phones provide for a more timely response from Garrison Military Police and Fire Department units.

When dialing 911 from a cell phone on a military installation you will normally contact a 911 operator outside of the installation causing a delayed emergency response time. Please notify the 911 operator of your location and/or location of the emergency and the garrison you are calling from.

If you need to make an emergency call using a cell phone, make direct contact with Fire Department or Military Police personnel by using the alternate direct dial emergency telephone numbers for the garrison you are calling from; these numbers are usually available on the garrison web-site. Program these numbers into your cell phone contacts list so they are readily available.

HOME FIRE PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Fires and burns continue to be a major cause of unintentional injury death at home. Particularly at risk are the very young and the very old.

Facts

- 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in the home.
- The leading cause of fire deaths is careless smoking.
- Having a working smoke detector more than doubles one's chances of surviving a fire.

Follow the safety tips listed below to protect yourself and your family.

Smoke Detectors

- One is definitely NOT enough! Every home should be equipped with smoke detectors on every level, particularly outside of sleeping areas.
- Ensure that your smoke detectors are tested monthly and batteries are replaced twice a year. Change batteries when you change your clocks.
- Encourage children to help test the smoke detectors. Familiarize them with the sounds of the alarm(s).



Fire Extinguishers

- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher in your kitchen (one rated for grease fires and electrical fires).
- It is a good idea to keep fire extinguishers near the furnace, garage, and anywhere else a fire may start. These extinguishers are affordable, life-saving equipment for your home.
- Make sure every able-bodied member of the family is trained and familiar with the proper way to use the fire extinguishers.
- If you must use an extinguisher, make sure you have a clear way out in the event you cannot put out the fire.

Flammables

- Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of reach and out of sight of children!
- Smoking is dangerous! No one should ever smoke in bed. Make sure that cigarettes/cigars are extinguished properly before dumping ashes.
- Dispose of materials from fireplaces and grills in non-flammable containers.
- Never put children to sleep in “day” clothes. Fire-retardant sleepwear can make a difference in burn outcomes.





Two Soldiers with the 513th Fire Fighting Detachment, 20th Engineer Brigade, work to drown a fire during the units burn house exercise. Photo by Victor J. Ayala

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army:
www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/2989209864/

Electrical Safety and Heat Sources

- Make sure your electrical system is not being over-taxed. This can cause a fire. Do your lights dim or flicker when extra appliances are plugged in? If you have questions or concerns, consult a certified electrician.
- Inspect wires. If you find any worn or exposed wiring from appliances, discontinue their use immediately! A fire is imminent!
- Keep appliances unplugged when not in use.

Escaping a Fire: EDITH—Exit Drills in the Home

- Practice EDITH (Exit Drills in the Home). These tips can help you put together and practice an effective home fire escape plan.
- Pull together everyone in your household and make a plan. Draw a floor plan of your home showing two ways out of each room, including windows. Do not forget to mark the location of each smoke alarm. Make it easy for all members of the family and visitors to understand.
- Make sure that everyone understands the escape plan and recognizes the sound of the smoke alarm.
- Be fully prepared for a real fire: when a smoke alarm sounds, get out immediately; and once you are out, stay out, leave the firefighting to the professionals!
- If you live in an apartment building, make sure that you are familiar with the building's evacuation plan. In case of a fire, use the stairs, never the elevator.
- When planning for a family with young children, be sure to teach them not to hide from fire or smoke and to go to the firefighters who are there to help them.
- All children should be familiar with the ideas of "crawling underneath the smoke" to escape a fire. "Stop, drop, and roll" is another safety principle that must be ingrained into children's minds.
- Multi-storied buildings are of special concern. Ensure that everyone is familiar with how to use an escape ladder if necessary.
- Make sure every sleeping room has two means of escape in the event of a fire. Windows provide a secondary means of escape. Ensure they are in proper working order, are not painted shut, and guards are able to be disengaged in case of fire and escape is necessary through that window.
- Make sure to practice your escape plan periodically. It will be easier to remember in case of an emergency.

- Call emergency responders from a neighbor's house. Young children should know their street address and last name (and, of course, how to dial 911 or garrison emergency number).
- After you've planned for the family, don't forget the pets. Alert firefighters about your pets. Don't rely on window or door decals to alert firefighters—such decals are often found to be outdated. In the event your pet suffers from smoke inhalation, rush the animal to the vet.

COOKING FIRE SAFETY

Many families gather in the kitchen to spend time together, but it can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the house if you do not practice safe cooking behaviors. Cooking equipment, most often a range or stovetop is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Cooking equipment is also the leading cause of unreported fires and associated injuries.

It is a recipe for serious injury or even death to wear loose clothing (especially hanging sleeves), walk away from a cooking pot on the stove, or leave flammable materials, such as potholders or paper towels, around the stove. Whether you are cooking the family holiday dinner or a snack for the children, practicing safe cooking behaviors will help keep you and your family safe.

Safe Cooking Behaviors

Choose the Right Equipment and Use It Properly

- Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions and code requirements when installing and operating cooking equipment.
- Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- Avoid grease build-up in the kitchen and on appliances. Cooking fires are common. Do not leave food cooking on stovetops unattended.

Watch What You Heat

- The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

If Your Clothes Catch Fire

If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll. Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover face with hands. Roll over and over or back and forth to put out the fire. Immediately cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and then seek emergency medical care.

- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- If a fire should occur, suffocate it with a pot/pan lid or a cookie sheet, or close the oven door.

Keep Things That Can Catch Fire and Heat Sources Apart

- Keep anything that can catch fire—potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains—away from your stovetop.
- Keep the stovetop, burners, and oven clean.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and nearby countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

How and When to Fight Cooking Fires

- When in doubt, just get out. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 911 or the local emergency number after you leave.
- If you do try to fight the fire, be sure others are already getting out and you have a clear path to the exit.
- Always keep an oven mitt and a lid nearby when you are cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (make sure you are wearing the oven mitt). Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing.
- If you have a fire in your microwave oven, turn it off immediately and keep the door closed. Never open the door until the fire is completely out. Unplug the appliance if you can safely reach the outlet.
- After a fire, both ovens and microwaves should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.